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President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 40 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/538, A/55/639)

Draft resolutions (A/55/L.49, A/55/L.50)

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The General Assembly has been considering the situation in the Middle East for 52 years now. There have been good times and bad, there have been wars, and there have been efforts to attain the lofty goal of the United Nations: a comprehensive, peaceful settlement in the Middle East. Unfortunately, as we stand just beyond the threshold of the twenty-first century, we are obliged to note that the situation remains extremely unstable.

In 1991, at Madrid, we saw the beginning of the Arab-Israeli peace process; significant progress was made in the efforts to bring the peoples of the Middle East closer together. The Madrid process and the way in which it has evolved prove that the international community is capable of finding responses commensurate with what is needed to resolve regional problems such as this one. As a co-sponsor of the peace process, Russia has always done all it could to achieve the goals we all seek for the development of the Middle East and of Palestine.

It is a matter of great concern to all that the crisis that arose two months ago has had such a negative effect on all that had been achieved over the past few years towards the potential achievement of a peaceful settlement. That proves that there are close links among all that happens in that region. The deterioration of the situation in the West Bank has affected the entire region.

From the very outset of the crisis, the Russian Federation, President Putin himself and our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ivanov, have been tirelessly doing everything possible to improve the situation in the West Bank and Gaza. Their priority goal is to bring the parties to the negotiating table. As soon as the tragedy occurred, Mr. Ivanov travelled to the region in order to make direct contact with both sides and to try and get the peace process back on track. At the same time, President Putin was in constant telephone contact with Chairman Arafat and Prime Minster Barak, the two regional leaders. In our view, one of the most important things achieved by our efforts was that during his recent visit to Moscow Mr. Arafat was placed in telephone contact with Mr. Barak thanks to the Kremlin's intercession. During that contact they agreed to resume meetings between representatives of the Palestinian and the Israeli security forces with a view to resolving the present crisis. They agreed also to resume the political dialogue.

One of the important items on the agenda of the Moscow talks was the search for ways to get the Palestinian-Israeli and the Israeli-Syrian-Lebanese peace process back on track. Our discussions continue

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with all parties concerned, and with the United States as co-sponsor of the peace process and with other representatives of the international community, to find the best way for the regional peace process to succeed, including on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

Mr. Aboud (Comoros), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is important for all parties to be brought into the process to find a solution acceptable to all on the basis of Security Council resolutions aimed at achieving peaceful coexistence for all the inhabitants of the region. Here, we support the constructive efforts of the Secretary-General to do all that he can to improve Palestinian-Israeli relations, which are a key factor in the situation in the region. In that connection, the Russian Federation considers it very important that everything possible be done to implement the guidelines laid down at Sharm el-Sheikh. The present crisis must not be allowed to overshadow our efforts to find ways to put the peace process back on track.

We are convinced that true peace in the Middle East will be impossible without constructive dialogue between Israel and Syria, the result of which should be the return of the Syrian Golan Heights and the establishment of normal relations between the two States. Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon was an important milestone on the path towards implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), but to achieve genuine, stable peace between Israel and Lebanon the peace process between Lebanon and Israel must result in an agreement. Unfortunately, recent events have shown that this will not be easy.

Let me stress in conclusion that the international community has no right to lose sight of the political potential that has been accumulating over the past several years. Everything that has been achieved must be preserved. Only in that way can we have a positive effect on the situation in the Middle East.

Mr. Pamir (Turkey): The Middle East is passing through difficult and arduous times that are taxing the best efforts of everyone who is working for the establishment of a lasting peace and who wishes to see the peoples of the region embrace the new century with hope and confidence. The series of conflicts — which for the better part of the twentieth century robbed the peoples of the region of their best — is not the true legacy of that historic land in which the greatest traditions of humankind took root.

It was frightening and truly saddening, to say the least, to see the violence erupt in the way it did, claiming the lives of more than 300 people, predominantly Palestinian, and causing thousands of injuries and great material damage. From the very start, the foremost task was to defuse dangerously heightened tension, and it remains so today. It was in that context that the convening of the Sharm el-Sheikh summit had a salutary outcome.

The basic axiom underlying that outcome was that violence and outright conflict cannot serve the fundamental interests and aspirations of either side. Indeed, we cannot but take the long view and look forward. The results of the summit should be upheld by all parties, and the full and faithful implementation of that basic understanding should be allowed to form the groundwork for the resumption of the peace process. I cannot stress enough that the peace process represents the only real, viable chance; we must firmly grasp it for the benefit of future generations, for the sake not only of today, but of tomorrow.

The establishment of the fact-finding committee in the aftermath of the Summit is an important and encouraging development. It has been entrusted with a crucial task, and we look forward to the successful completion of its mandate within the agreed timetable. We call upon the parties to fully cooperate with the Committee, in view of its intrinsic value as a confidence-building measure.

As a country of the region, we rightly fear the possible consequences of continued violence and the escalation of the conflict through an intensification of that vicious circle.

Turkey has every reason to back and give support to every effort geared to breaking this dangerous cycle. This will help us achieve the noble aim of peace in this beleaguered part of the world. Violence should not stop us from working towards attaining our higher objectives, while respecting the enlightened interests of the people of the region. We should never lose sight of the great benefits that a lasting peace will surely bestow upon us.

As has been clearly demonstrated once again, such historic opportunities do not come our way as easily and often as some seem to suppose. That is why Turkey has earnestly given its full support to the peace process since its very inception.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the core of the problem and is the key to a solution. Reaching a final status agreement remains the constant objective. We must remember that the parties had just started addressing the most delicate issues for the first time, and that progress, to a certain extent, was being registered. The Holy City of Jerusalem should be a potent symbol of tolerance and coexistence, its religious, cultural and historic status kept intact for all.

Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) remain the basis for achieving a lasting peace in the region — a peace which will pave the way for prosperity and enlightened cooperation. The Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), was another crucial step in the right direction.

We wish to underline once again how much had been achieved in the context of the peace process, and how great had been the effort exerted by the sides to secure a brighter future, until violence had its way.

We respect the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and we are endeavouring to alleviate their suffering. Many injured Palestinians are receiving medical treatment in Turkey. In-kind medical assistance has also been sent to the region. In addition to financial humanitarian assistance — amounting to $500,000-$3 million in structural financial assistance is being provided to the Palestinian Authority.

It is extremely important that the people of the region should be able to live in an atmosphere free from fear and desolation, and that their toil and labour bear fruit in this era of globalization and at the dawning of a new age. Indeed, people who are destined to live together, side by side, should prosper together. That is the wish of God. Hence a negotiated settlement is the only way. The alternative, as we know, is chaos and suffering, neither of which we deserve.

Turkey will continue to support efforts seeking the resumption of the peace process as well as to the more immediate measures aimed at quelling the violence.

In this respect, aware of our role in the region and of the need to keep the confidence of both sides, we will remain informed optimists. Whatever reasons for pessimism there may be, we reject any defeatist attitude and continue to hope and work for the fully-fledged resumption of the peace process, including its multilateral track. After all, this is the only way.

Mr. Lancry (Israel) (*spoke in French*): I should like, if I may, take this opportunity to convey, in Arabic, my best wishes to our Muslim friends for Ramadan.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

It gives me pleasure to offer you, my Muslim colleagues, my best felicitations on the occasion of holy Ramadan.

(*spoke in English*)

The recent history of the Middle East has witnessed many tragedies and some triumphs. Countless wars have been waged and lives lost in a series of bloody campaigns intent on nothing less than destruction. But today the tide is turning. The Middle East stands on the verge of a new epoch. Despite recent setbacks, tremendous progress has been made in turning enemies into partners — partners for peace — ending decades of hostility and embarking on a new path of peace and coexistence.

The time has come to break the cycle of tragedy and begin a new era of triumphs in the making of peace. The first of these triumphs was the groundbreaking peace treaty between Israel and Egypt achieved in 1979. Fifteen years later, another triumph was celebrated under the courageous leadership of the late King Hussein: a second peace treaty in the Middle East, between Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles and the Oslo accords that followed constitute another historic breakthrough towards peace. The positive atmosphere was further reinforced by the recent established of relations with Mauritania. This is in addition to the official ties between Israel and Morocco, Tunisia, Oman and Qatar, and the gradual development of ties with other States in North Africa and the Gulf. We hope that the cooling of these relations in recent weeks will be temporary in nature.

Another important step towards strengthening regional security was taken by Israel this year along its northern border. In May Israel unilaterally withdrew its forces from southern Lebanon, in full compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). The Israeli fulfilment of its part under resolution 425 (1978) was

confirmed by the Secretary-General and subsequently endorsed by the Security Council and referred to in Security Council resolution 1310 (2000). It must be stressed that in confirming Israel's compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), the Secretary-General specifically determined that the area known as Shaba'a was not Lebanese territory. Consequently, subsequent Lebanese claims against Israel regarding that area, justifying aggressive activity by terrorists emanating from Lebanese territory, are in direct contravention of the Secretary-General's findings.

Although Israel had hoped that its withdrawal from Lebanon would promote peace and security on the border, this, unfortunately, was not the case. Just this Sunday, a powerful roadside charge was detonated against an Israeli patrol by terrorists from Lebanon who had infiltrated the area, killing an Israeli soldier and wounding two others. The attach took place in the region of Mount Dov, almost a kilometre within the Israeli side of the "blue line".

This latest attack represents the continuation of the recent drastic and dangerous deterioration along the Lebanon-Israel border. These incidents included the 7 October abduction of three Israeli soldiers from within Israel by terrorists who infiltrated from Lebanon.

Israel views these acts of aggression with the utmost gravity and as a gross violation of the Charter of the United Nations, fundamental principles of international law and Security Council resolution 425 (1978), pursuant to which Israel withdrew its forces from Lebanese territory.

In the light of this most recent hostile attack against Israel from Lebanese territory and the growing escalation on that border, Israel has repeatedly called upon the Government of Lebanon to fulfil its obligations under international law and as required in resolution 425 (1978) to restore, with the assistance of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), its effective control over southern Lebanon and ensure that international peace and security are maintained on its side of the border. Despite these pleas, the Government of Lebanon has failed for months to restrain, and has even encouraged, provocative and violent cross-border attacks against Israel. Continued diplomatic attempts on the part of Israel to warn that the situation on the northern border could deteriorate have gone unheeded.

A continuation of the present situation, with these ongoing acts of aggression by Lebanese terrorists, carries with it a danger of imminent escalation. Consequently, the international community must demand of Lebanon that it fulfil its responsibilities under Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 1310 (2000), which entail putting an end to these acts of aggression from Lebanese territory, establishing effective Lebanese authority in the area and acting to bring peace and security to our common border.

This year, Israel has also continued in its quest to achieve a comprehensive peace with Syria on the basis of the framework established at the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991. The most recent effort to move peace forward took place at meetings between Prime Minister Barak and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Shara' in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, in January of this year. At those talks, Israel presented, in the words of United States President Bill Clinton, "a territorial proposal, which is quite significant". Yet this and other proposals went unanswered by the Syrian side, which chose instead to break off the negotiations. When the United States attempted to clarify Syria's response to these Israeli proposals, at the Clinton and Al-Assad Geneva summit on 26 March, it became clear that no response was forthcoming. The next day, President Clinton stated, regarding President Al-Assad, "the ball is in his court now".

Commenting on the American effort to promote an agreement, the United States State Department spokesman stated on 30 March 2000:

> "That effort yielded certain results on the Israeli side that President Clinton noted, which the Syrian President rejected. ...
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> "We believe that it is now the turn of the Syrians to formulate responses, formulate ideas of their own. And so that's where the matter rests at the moment."

Several months later, we are still waiting for that Syrian response. We hope that response, when it does come, will constitute another triumph for peace.

We must not forget that any discussion of the situation in the Middle East must not only consider Israel's immediate neighbours, but must also address the threats to peace and stability on the periphery of the region.

The policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a stalwart of Middle Eastern rejectionism, stand in direct conflict with the principles that form the basis for regional peace. Iran continues to support the terrorist activities of Hezbollah, an organization that openly engages in a campaign against the existence of the State of Israel. In addition, Iran is engaged in continuing efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. We have overwhelming evidence that Iran has succeeded in developing chemical weapons, and we have ample reason to believe Iran has developed biological warfare capabilities as well. Iran has already tested the Shihab-3 long-range missile, a weapon that, with its 1,300-kilometre range, has the capacity to reach Israeli cities. When it was paraded through the streets of Tehran in September 1998, the inscription on the missile carrier declared: "Israel should be wiped off the map."

This development comes as Iranian officials continue to call for jihad and the destruction of the State of Israel. The language of Iran's leaders reflects a total negation of Israel that transcends any difference there may be over our respective foreign policies. They officially brand Israel as the "Small Satan" and officially oppose all our attempts at reaching peace with our neighbours. Iran has also been involved in terrorist activities aimed at Jewish and Israeli targets around the world, including the bombings of the Israeli Embassy and Jewish Community Centre in Buenos Aires. While he speaks eloquently of dialogue among civilizations to United Nations gatherings, Iranian President Khatami still thought it acceptable to state in Tehran less than a year ago that:

> "There is only one way to resolve the Palestinian question, and that is through the annihilation and destruction of the Zionist regime. The peace talks are one of the biggest cheats and the ugliest ploys used by Israel and its main supporter, America."

Meanwhile, Iraq's persistence in developing weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery — much of this under the radar of international arms inspectors — is particularly troubling in light of that country's proven enthusiasm for firing missiles at civilian populations. In the midst of the Gulf War, Iraq, in an unprovoked aggression, launched dozens of missiles at Israeli cities.

We are gravely concerned over Iraq's failure to comply with Security Council requirements and over the fact that weapons verification and monitoring work has not been possible for the past two years. Iraq's denial of access to UNMOVIC inspection teams and its history of hostility towards Israel make that country a continued threat to Israel's security in particular and to regional stability in general.

While there are countries in the Middle East that remain openly committed to the destruction of Israel, we also must examine the motivations of those who declare their strategic interest in achieving peace. We have seen that our potential partners appear to be espousing a concept of peace that is widely divergent from that propounded by Israel. Following the Shepherdstown talks, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Shara', speaking before the Arab Writers Union in Damascus on 27 January of this year, described the Syrian view of peace. He stated the following, as published in the Al-Osbua Al-Adabi and As-Safir newspapers on 12 February 2000:

> "The establishment of the state of peace in the future means turning this military confrontation into a political, intellectual, economic and commercial confrontation. So let us give the peace confrontation a chance. The restoration of the entire area of Palestine is a long-term strategy which cannot be achieved in one stage. The Ba'ath Party ideology views the liberation in phases. The regaining of the occupied Arab territories is only the first phase."

Our view of peace is different. The desire for peace with our neighbours represents the supreme goal of the State of Israel and its citizens. Since 1978, Israel has demonstrated a willingness to make compromises in pursuit of peace and to constantly search for new peacemaking initiatives.

Israel envisions a broad circle of peace in the Middle East that will encompass all of our neighbours and constitute a complete and final end to the state of conflict. We seek to establish clearly defined borders that would eliminate all territorial disputes between us. We seek a peace that will provide a framework for regional security, will curb the threat to stability posed by extremist elements and reduce the need for States to expend copious amounts of resources to ensure their defence. We seek a peace that will improve the lives of all the peoples of the Middle East, creating a predictable economic environment, attracting foreign investment and facilitating sustainable economic and

social development. Indeed, peace holds the key to the unification of our entire region.

For Israel, normal peaceful relations include the establishment of full diplomatic ties, the removal of boycotts, repeal of discriminatory legislation and practices, transportation and communication links and the free movement of goods and people over borders. Peace treaties also provide a framework for cooperation with regard to environment, cultural relations, tourism, health, agriculture, crime prevention and the elimination of incitement.

The recognition must be apparent among our partners that there are far better ways to direct our time, our energies and our resources than in the continuation of confrontation by other means.

Despite Israel's desire to achieve peace and its proven willingness to compromise on behalf of peace, certain States in our region continue to reject our very existence. Some of these nations have chosen to directly engage in, or indirectly sponsor, violence and terrorism against us. Others envision a future of ongoing confrontation and dispute.

We choose to view the future in a different light. History has shown us the proper path, the path of dialogue and reconciliation. Let us walk this path together. Peace in the Middle East need not be a dream, and endless confrontation need not be our only reality. Surely, the triumph of peace, true peace, will be the triumph for all people in the Middle East and for all generations to come.

In order to reach it there is a clear-cut imperative. Peace needs an unshakeable commitment — both ethical and political — that has to be assumed by the regional leadership for the sake of future generations. The peace vision has to be free from the throes and vicissitudes of yesterday and nurtured by the apogee of tomorrow.

Israel is opposed to the two biased and one-sided draft resolutions introduced under this item. We call upon the members of the Assembly to vote against them.

Mr. Eguiguren (Chile) *(spoke in Spanish)*: May I begin by expressing my delegation's deep sorrow at the tragic and violent events which have taken place since 28 September in the occupied territories and in Israel, which have resulted in so many dead and injured, so much destruction and intolerance. We launch an appeal for restraint and calm so that the parties can once again start out on the road to peace.

Since we are examining the general situation in the Middle East, my delegation takes this opportunity to express its satisfaction with the fact that Israel has complied with Security Council resolution 425 (1978) by withdrawing its forces from southern Lebanon.

Moreover, Chile hopes that talks can quickly be resumed between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic with regard to the Golan Heights, and in conformity with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

With regard to the current crisis in the region, we hope that the parties will comply without delay with Security Council resolution 1322 (2000) and the commitments of Sharm el-Sheikh. We welcome the creation of a fact-finding committee and we hope that it will be able to begin working as quickly as possible. We support the activities of the Secretary-General, who at the request of the Security Council, is to explore with the parties concrete measures to put an end to the violence. Similarly, we endorse all efforts by United Nations Member States to overcome the crisis and to bring the peace process back on track.

Chile would like to recall those principles which govern our foreign policy and which are applicable to the general situation in the region. These are based on full compliance with the principles of international law, such as the peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for and compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and international humanitarian law, in which the protection of human life, especially civilians, is fundamental. We recognize the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. We also recognize the right of Israelis and Palestinians to live within safe, internationally recognized borders.

We sincerely hope that the current crisis in the region can be overcome quickly and that once again the language of peace, hope and reconciliation will be spoken.

What the Israelis and the Palestinians must realize is no one emerges victorious from violence. We are certain that a negotiated, just and lasting outcome established within the framework of Security Council resolutions and including the basic elements of security for both parties is the only path open to Palestinians and Israelis. This is the only legacy that they can leave

to their children if they hope that one day they will live in a climate of true harmony and development with their neighbours in the region.

Chile maintains excellent relations with the Arab countries, with the State of Israel and with the Palestinian Authority. As in the rest of the world, in Chile the development of this crisis which continues day after day is followed with great concern. We find what is happening in the region profoundly disquieting. The Middle East is a region very dear to the hearts of all Chileans. In our country there is a large population of Arab origin, mostly Palestinian, and a large population which is Jewish. All of them live together in friendship and thus prove that coexistence is not only possible but can also be fruitful and beneficial.

Mr. Kuchynski (Ukraine): The situation in the Middle East has been one of the most complex and difficult political issues of the international arena, and it has remained at the top of the United Nations agenda for more than half a century. Through all these years, the General Assembly and the Security Council called for, and provided a basis for, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East in hundreds of their resolutions, the bulk of which remain unfulfilled.

Over the past year the Middle East peace process, the core of which is the question of Palestine, has witnessed its ups and downs. The Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian permanent status talks and the second Camp David Summit rekindled our hopes that the beginning of a new millennium would finally bring a long-awaited peace to the whole region.

We were encouraged by the remarkable progress made by the Israeli and Palestinian sides at Camp David on the most complicated and sensitive issues of permanent status. In our view, the two sides were only one step away from achieving an accord that could have opened the way to ending their decades-long conflict and changed radically the fate of the whole region.

Regrettably, our hopes have not come true. Moreover, the upsurge in violence during the last two months in the Palestinian territories, in Israel and recently in southern Lebanon brought, in our view, the Middle East peace process to the most crucial stage of its history of the past few decades.

My country is deeply alarmed by the daily news of the fierce Arab-Israeli clashes that have broken out since 28 September and have already claimed the lives of approximately 300 people, most of them Palestinians. We mourn the victims of this senseless bloodshed and wanton killings and express our sincere condolences to their bereaved families.

Ukraine condemns acts of excessive and indiscriminate use of force against the Palestinian civilians and calls on Israel to stop them immediately. Everything should be done to ensure full respect for the Fourth Geneva Convention. Any attack or reprisal against the civilian population is legally prohibited and inadmissible. We are also convinced that Israel has to stop its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories and should not resort to economic sanctions against the Palestinian population.

My country is convinced that the Palestinian people should be in a position to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and statehood. Their legitimate aspirations for justice, freedom and dignity are fairly understandable to Ukraine as a newly independent State.

Similarly, Ukraine recognizes the legitimate right of Israel to live within secure and recognized borders. Ukraine categorically rejects any acts of terrorism by anyone committed as a means of reaching any political goal. In our view, all violent or provocative actions by radical elements should be halted resolutely since they lead only to the further escalation of violence. In this context, the acts of violence against the Israelis are equally condemned in my country.

It is well known that violence begets violence. Therefore, we are convinced that there is no other alternative to the parties but to stop all acts of violence against each other immediately and unconditionally, to overcome their animosity and, for the sake of peace, to come back to the negotiating table. At this critical juncture, we call on the Israelis and the Palestinians to demonstrate their political courage, wisdom and restraint. We urge them to refrain from any unilateral actions that could further aggravate the situation and pre-empt the outcome of the final status talks.

It is our firm conviction that both parties should resume their negotiations as soon as possible, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and resolution 338 (1973), including the principle of land for peace,

as well as on the principles laid down at the Madrid conference and in the Oslo agreements.

Taking into account the gravity of the current crisis in the region, everything should be done by the international community, with the United Nations at the forefront, to dispel the shadow of a large-scale war in the region that seems to nearing. We are of the view that at this crucial period the international community should redouble its efforts to that end.

In this context, my country praises the intense diplomatic efforts by all major international players involved, in particular the United States, and pays tribute to the personal contribution of President Clinton aimed at reinstating the peace process. We also commend the efforts by the Russian Federation, the European Union, Egypt and all others, who over the years have contributed to and continue to support the peace process.

We welcome the constructive engagement of the Secretary-General in seeking ways out of the current crisis. We strongly encourage the Secretary-General to continue his active involvement in the matter. It is also our hope that the commencement of the fact-finding committee activities, as outlined in Security Council resolution 1322 (2000) and agreed upon at the summit meeting at Sharm el-Sheikh, will play a positive role in turning down the violence.

In our view, the United Nations should continue to maintain its permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved in conformity with the relevant resolutions.

My country maintains that the achievement of a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East process is impossible without finding acceptable solutions to all the integral parts of the Arab-Israeli dispute.

In this context, we welcome the fact that the Israeli-Lebanese track has made significant progress this year, following Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon. We are satisfied with the implementing of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) — which in fact enabled the deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) — the establishing of the Blue Line along the border between Israel and Lebanon and the restoring of Lebanese Government control over its territory.

In this context, Ukraine again commends the Secretary-General, his special envoy Mr. Roed-Larsen, and UNIFIL personnel for the impressive results of their efforts to stabilize the situation in the region.

Mindful of these positive events and of the importance to support them through United Nations efforts, Ukraine has contributed to UNIFIL its engineer battalion of 650 men.

At the same time, we are concerned at the eruption of fighting on the Lebanese border late last week. In this regard, my country joins the Secretary-General in his recent appeal to all parties involved to stop the violence and respect the blue line.

We regret that the Israeli-Syrian track has been stalled for quite a while. It is indeed in the interests of all the peoples of the region to have the Israeli-Syrian talks on the occupied Syrian Golan resumed without further delay or any preconditions. In this regard, we call on the Governments of Israel and Syria to re-engage further in their direct talks following the Washington summit, the January round of talks in the United States, the United Nations-Syria Geneva summit in April and other developments. We hope that the ongoing crisis will not prevent the parties from resuming their political dialogue and normalization of relations as soon as possible.

Finally, let me confirm that the development of mutually beneficial and partnership relations, on both the bilateral and multilateral bases, with all the countries of the Middle East facilitates the peace process in the region and remains one of the main pillars of my country's foreign policy. Therefore, I would like to reiterate Ukraine's determination to contribute further to the process of restoring a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. In these endeavours, we are guided by our sincere wish to see all the peoples of this region living as good neighbours in peace, stability and economic prosperity.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): The past year will be chronicled in history as one marked by surging hopes and great optimism, as well as by deepening despair and bitter frustration in the search for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, particularly the restoration of Palestinian inalienable rights. This session should have borne witness to a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian track of negotiations that would have heralded a new era, assuring a historic reconciliation of all peoples in the region and enabling them to live in peace, harmony and human dignity.

Instead, we are confronted with a rapidly deteriorating and explosive situation in the Middle East region.

We cannot but express our dismay and disappointment at the current state of affairs, in which military aggression has been substituted for peace negotiations. The Palestinian people, including innocent civilians, women and children, are bearing the brunt of a campaign of violence in which hundreds of them have been killed and injured. The nascent Palestinian economy and physical infrastructure have been devastated and the rule of force is seeking to stem the will of the people.

Given the danger of further escalating violence and widening conflict, there should be no delay in according urgent consideration to the deployment of a United Nations protection force. We also hope that the visit of the United Nations fact-finding mission will help yield useful information and thereby contribute to quelling the violence. Israel must be called upon to cease its aggression without preconditions, for failure to prevent further escalation on the ground will ignite the whole region and result in incalculable and uncontrollable consequences not only for the Middle East, but for the world at large. There can be no alternative to seeking the path to peace.

From Madrid to Oslo, Washington to Hebron, Cairo to Wye River and Sharm el-Sheikh to Camp David, the peace negotiations have been long and arduous and strewn with formidable obstacles. Throughout this process, the Palestinian people have been undaunted by their adversities and sufferings and have vigorously pursued the path to peace.

The stakes of achieving peace for the Palestinians and for the people in the region are high, for the issues involved concern not only the question of peace, territory and settlement, but also the future of an entire people and their never-ending struggle for freedom and independence.

Peace, however, is illusory if it means unimplemented agreements, broken deadlines and unmet commitments; nor can peace flourish and grow when, on the one hand, accords are reached while, on the other, untenable policies continue unabated. These have included the expansion of settlements, the confiscation of Arab lands, the demolition of houses and property and the economic strangulation of the Palestinian territories. The interests of peace can never be served if its sole purpose is to legitimize occupation and dispossession.

Indonesia has held steadfast to its position, as reaffirmed in numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, that a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East, with the question of Palestine as its core, can be attained only if full account is taken of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to their homeland and due recognition of the rights of all States in the region to live within internationally recognized boundaries. This settlement must be on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and of the bedrock principle of land for peace. It is essential, therefore, that Israel withdraw from all occupied territories, including Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights.

Furthermore, the United Nations should play an active role, especially since the Organization has made in the past and can in the future make important contributions to peace in the Middle East. This is the task before us in seeking productive negotiations to reach a solution based on mutual respect and accommodation for the freedom and prosperity of future generations. It is our fervent hope that, out of the tragedy of recent weeks, a new and just vision of peace will be realized for all the peoples in the region.

Finally, my delegation has noted with satisfaction the positive developments that have taken place in Lebanon, especially the withdrawal by Israel in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). It is particularly gratifying that, after more than two decades of occupation, the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon have been fully restored.

At the onset of this new century, this rare opportunity to reach a peaceful settlement should be seized not only for the people who have endured long years of insecurity, violence and denial of their fundamental rights, but also for international peace and security. The United Nations and the international community should exert every effort to support the common cause and to help all parties to move decisively forward in the quest for lasting peace in the region. Only thus can it be said that one of the most intractable conflicts of the last century has been relegated to history.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): Norway is deeply concerned about the escalating violence in the Middle

East. Norway also mourns the loss of life. Violence is threatening to overtake the logic of peace. Fear, resentment and hatred on both sides are now impeding a return to the difficult task of achieving peace through political means. Only a clear vision, steadfast determination and a profound sense of historical necessity can now keep the peace process moving forward.

In this precarious situation, it is easier to focus on opportunities lost over the last weeks than gains made over the last years. However, it is important to remember that Israel and the Palestinians made more progress in their negotiations during these years than in the previous four decades. The Israelis and the Palestinians also made more progress during the Camp David Summit than any one was imagining only a few weeks before. These events show that, despite today's tragic situation, there are more reasons to believe in the continuation of negotiations than in the continuation of violence.

Norway appeals to the sense of responsibility of both sides not to respond to provocations. Norway urges the parties to do their utmost to cease all actions that could escalate the conflict. The parties must implement the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings.

Norway supports the mandate given by the Security Council to the Secretary-General to explore the possibility of establishing an international presence in the Palestinian territories. Norway commends the Secretary-General for his active role in the peace process and for his contribution in connection with the Sharm el-Sheikh summit.

The peace process contains both political and economic elements. Continued economic development in the Palestinian territories is critical to a lasting peace and will also benefit Israel. Indeed, international support for this much-needed development has improved the quality of life of average Palestinians and demonstrated the potential benefits of a lasting peace.

The violence of the last two months is threatening this positive development. If security measures continue to impede the normal functioning of the economy, and thus weaken the social stability of Palestinian society, support for the political process may also be undermined. Norway therefore urges Israel to lift the closure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and instead to encourage the development of the Palestinian economy.

The President returned to the Chair.

Norway has always understood and supported Israel's quest for security. We have condemned terrorist attacks from any quarters. But lasting security cannot be sustained at the expense of others. Hence, Israel too must respect the safety and security of the Palestinians. Excessive and disproportionate use of force against the Palestinians has exacerbated the tensions and fuelled further violence.

The peace process is now at a critical juncture. The historical burden borne by each side weighs more heavily as they confront the issues that lie at the very core of the conflict. The only long-term solution to the ongoing conflict is a final peace agreement. Such an agreement must be just and fair. Only with a fair agreement will the parties find it in their interest to choose peace instead of war.

Great efforts and sacrifices will have to be made on both sides in order to reach a final peace agreement, which might be preceded by a new interim agreement. Significant progress was made at Camp David. The chance of achieving a comprehensive peace agreement has never been greater, and never have the potential consequences of a possible failure been more disastrous. Norway urges the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to use this window of opportunity and to take brave steps to ensure peace and stability for all.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/55/L.49 and A/55/L.50.

I call on the representative of the United States of America, who wishes to speak in explanation of vote before the voting.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Carp (United States of America): The United States continues to support a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. We will do everything we can to assist the parties in reaching a negotiated agreement which will resolve their differences.

The situation in the Middle East is at a critical point. This body should now concentrate on supporting the parties' efforts to take the difficult steps to end the

cycle of violence and return to negotiations on a settlement.

The draft resolution entitled the resolution entitled "The Syrian Golan", like so many of the other resolutions dealing with the Arab-Israeli dispute, seeks to inject the General Assembly into negotiations. Both Syria and Israel continue to support the principle of a negotiating process to resolve their differences, and resolutions such as this do not contribute to that goal.

The United States will abstain in the voting on the draft resolution on Jerusalem, consistent with our belief that the future of Jerusalem should be decided through permanent status negotiations.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/55/L.49 and A/55/L.50.

We turn first to draft resolution A/55/L.49, entitled "Jerusalem".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel

Abstaining:

Angola, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, United States of America

Draft resolution A/55/L.49 was adopted by 145 votes to 1, with 5 abstentions (resolution 55/50).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Jamaica informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: Draft resolution A/55/L.50 is entitled "The Syrian Golan".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman,

Pakistan, Panama, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Andorra, Angola, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Yugoslavia

Draft resolution A/55/L.50 was adopted by 96 votes to 2, with 55 abstentions (resolution 55/51)

[Subsequently, the delegation of Jamaica informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Bigot (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of explaining the vote of the European Union on the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.50.

The European Union would like to reiterate here its firm commitment to a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the principle of land for peace, and the Madrid and Oslo accords.

The European Union wishes once again to express its deep concern in the face of the current crisis in the occupied territories and in Israel. The European Union reiterates its wish for an early resumption of the peace talks, which were interrupted despite the hopes engendered by the Camp David meeting. We also fully support the early resumption of negotiations on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks of the peace process.

As in previous years, the draft resolution on the Syrian Golan, which has just been adopted, contains geographical references which prejudge the outcome of bilateral negotiations. That is why the European Union has, as in the past, again abstained in the voting.

The European Union reiterates here most solemnly its support for all those in the region and in the international community who are working for peace.

Mr. Estreme (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine Republic voted in favour of draft resolution A/55/L.50 on the Syrian Golan because we believe that the basic thrust of the resolution is related to the illegal acquisition of territories by force. Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of a state. This is an imperative standard of international law.

I would like also to clarify the position of the delegation of Argentina with regard to operative paragraph 6 of the resolution. The fact that Argentina has voted in favour does not necessarily prejudge the geographical references contained in that operative paragraph.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the vote.

I shall now call on those representatives who have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Tadmoury (Lebanon) *(spoke in Arabic)*: We have listened to the statement made by the representative of Israel, and it seem, to us that once again he is taking Lebanon to task, as if Lebanon had occupied Israel for 22 years and not vice-versa. Israel

has caused many deaths and injuries among women, children and the elderly, and has destroyed houses and infrastructure. Since 24 May of this year, the beginning of Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Lebanese territories, Israel has been violating resolution 425 (1978). The reports of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon to that effect are before the Secretariat.

Israel has on occasion violated Lebanon's borders and shot at civilians including people on their way to work. It infiltrates on a daily basis Lebanese air space, terrorizing the population with its aircrafts' sonic booms. In addition, Israel has infiltrated Lebanese maritime territory. It stopped a Lebanese tugboat and shot at it. These are only a few examples of the violations of resolution 425 (1978) perpetrated by Israel.

The representative of Israel speaks of tension and of Lebanese violations. Let me recall that Shaba'a Farms is on Lebanese territory and that we have shown our reservations about the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 425 (1978). In memorandums sent to the United Nations, highly placed Syrian officials reiterated the Lebanese identity of the Shaba'a Farms. Let me also reaffirm that the Lebanese have full sovereignty over Shaba'a Farms.

I should like to ask the representative of Israel what Israel is doing in the Shaba'a Farms. Are the Farms Israeli? Are Israeli soldiers there for an outing, or is it an occupation?

We fear that Israel will use the United Nations to cover its acts of aggression, because its threats are repeated daily. Because these threats have been made by Israel's highest officials, we fear that it will carry them out using the United Nations as a cover.

Let me also note that there are 19 Lebanese prisoners of war and other prisoners in Israeli jails who have not had a court trial, in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Some of those prisoners of war were kidnapped from their villages. They were not even at the front, or on the battlefield. Why has Israel kept them until now? Why has Israel violated the principles of the Fourth Geneva Convention?

What is contained in the Israeli representative's statement concerning alleged Lebanese violations of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) appears to be a cover-up of Israel's non-implementation of United Nations resolutions. The tension and the bloodshed that we are witnessing today in the occupied Palestinian territories are cases in point.

There are more than 350,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Who expelled them from their land and forced them to go to Lebanon? This is the responsibility of Israel. Their presence is a source of tension, fear and intimidation used by the Israelis against the Lebanese. We hope that Israel will stop accusing Lebanon incessantly and will stop threatening us — threatening our infrastructure, our villages, our towns and our civilian population — as it has done continuously for 22 years.

I would like to state that Lebanon cooperates fully with the United Nations and with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Lebanon has taken practical steps in southern Lebanon, having sent its armed forces there and is trying to strengthen its actual authority there. One can see stability in southern Lebanon — there is nothing there to threaten safety, security and peace.

Once again, I would like to extend my thanks to the UNIFIL forces and to the United Nations Secretariat for their cooperation with us. We hope that this fruitful cooperation will be strengthened in the near future.

Mr. Hamzahei (Islamic Republic of Iran): It is quite natural for the representative of the Zionist regime to make incoherent, absurd and distasteful statements. The savage treatment of the Palestinians, especially Palestinian children, has outraged the world and brought condemnation on the Zionist regime. The Islamic Republic of Iran wishes to see peace and justice prevail in the Middle East — but a peace and justice that would benefit all people.

These unsubstantiated assertions by the Zionist representative this morning, including those with regard to bombing incidents in Buenos Aires, were meant to divert attention from the brutality and violations against the Palestinian people, which are in total disregard of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The primary question is whether those fighting foreign occupation are terrorists or freedom fighters. The lines are clearly defined in this respect. Forces of occupation and those with greater military might have traditionally considered those under their tyranny who did not fully submit to their injustice to be terrorists.

Israel's labelling of the Hezbollah and others who defend their dignity and withstand Zionist repression and egotistical expansionism as terrorists is certainly no exception, and the world knows it.

It is astonishing that a regime with a dark record of developing, producing and stockpiling many inhumane kinds of weapons of mass destruction ventures to accuse a country that is among those in the Middle East that have joined the most basic international instruments in the field of disarmament. Iran is a full party to the instruments that are the main pillars of international disarmament, such as the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Despite numerous calls from the international community, Israel consistently refuses to join these instruments and continues its clandestine programme of developing and producing several kinds of weapons of mass destruction. Israel now remains the only non-party to the NPT in the Middle East. At the same time, its nuclear weapons and non-safeguarded facilities continue, alarmingly, to menace regional and global peace and security.

That regime does not enjoy any better record in other fields of disarmament, mainly in the biological and chemical areas. There are numerous reports of Israel's clandestine chemical and biological programmes. Israel's refusal to join the relevant treaties is another corroborating indication of the existence of these programmes, which heightens the deep concern of the international community about its programmes of weapons of mass destruction and its arsenals.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the beginning of this meeting we heard another Israeli statement that distorted the truth and reflected the aggressive logic of the Israelis. The representative of Israel covered his statement, which was full of threats to the Arabs, with expressions of peace. He tried to show, erroneously, that Israel is the country that seeks true peace and that the Arabs reject peace.

However, the Israeli representative, as usual, did not mention the Israeli occupation of Arab lands and Israel's failure to comply with resolutions of international legitimacy adopted since 1948. He did not mention what happened in 1967, when the United Nations called upon Israel to let the Palestinian refugees return to their land and to restore the inalienable, legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The Israeli representative did not mention the settlements that have spread like a cancer in the occupied Arab lands or the daily declarations by Israeli officials stressing their attachment to the occupation of Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Syrian Golan.

The Israeli representative falsely believed that he would be able to hoodwink the representatives of the General Assembly by trying to give the impression that the Arab leadership is not sincere in its pursuit of peace. Here, we would like briefly to recall that Syria was precisely the country that opened the road to the peace process in Madrid. This is reflected accurately in the memorandums of the American officials, which the Israeli representative tried to distort in order to serve the interest of occupation. The Israeli representative, as a matter of fact, is not resented when he lies and distorts facts because he has been asked by his Government to do just that.

Everyone in this Assembly has the right to talk about the implementation of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, except the Israeli representative. Rejection of and disdain for international legitimacy runs in the blood of the Israeli leadership and Government. As was mentioned by the representative of Lebanon, Israel has not implemented resolution 425 (1978) in full. It has not withdrawn from the Shebaa farms, which are Lebanese.

The representative of Israel did not speak of Lebanese prisoners in Israel, who were kidnapped from their bedrooms, from their streets and from their villages. The fact is that Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon only as a result of the sacrifices made by the Lebanese people and by their national liberation movement. The Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon has continued from 1978 to this very day. Why did Israel wait 23 years to withdraw from southern Lebanon, even incompletely?

Syria has opted for peace as a strategic choice. But the peace that Syria seeks is not the peace of capitulation that Israel is trying to impose on us. The peace that Syria seeks, with the support of the entire world, is one that restores rights to those who possess them and that accords with international legitimacy and with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. Neither

Syria nor other Arab parties will accept any attempt by Israel not to withdraw to the lines of 4 June 1967 and not to return all Arab territories.

Israel has blocked the peace process not only on the Syrian track, but on all other tracks as well. As we speak, Israel is committing crimes against the Palestinian people. That is because of its greed and its wish to perpetuate its occupation and its usurpation of our rights. When Israel is ready for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace and is ready to withdraw from the occupied Syrian lands, the peace process can progress towards success and can achieve the goals for which we all aim. Israel refuses to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, and this means that the ball is in the Israeli court, as it always has been. Israel must respond to resolutions of international legitimacy, including those that the General Assembly adopted moments ago.

Mr. Al-Humaimidi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation wishes to exercise its right of reply with respect to the statement made by the representative of the Zionist entity. Let me begin by stating clearly that the Zionist entity is the most brutal occupying force of modern times. It heads the list when it comes to perpetrating crimes and violating international humanitarian law and human rights. What the occupied Palestinian territories have seen over the past two months is the best proof of the bloodthirsty, hegemonic nature of that regime, which comes here and speaks as a victim. The gladiator has donned the garb of his victim. The executioner is speaking as though he were the victim. We are used to such things from the Zionist entity. But those tactics can convince no one today — if indeed they ever met with success.

The delegation of the Zionist entity spoke a number of lies about my country, Iraq, which it is trying to market in this forum. It is obvious to everyone that that regime has never demonstrated a commitment to the resolutions of the General Assembly or of the Security Council. It is thus the last entity to have the right to speak of legitimacy or respect for Security Council resolutions.

As regards the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction, the Zionist entity possesses the largest arsenal of biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction, as well as more then 200 nuclear warheads and their means of delivery. These could strike not only all Arab countries but all the world's Islamic nations. Its acquisition and possession of such weapons take place beyond international safeguards and constitute a flagrant violation of all disarmament regimes and non-proliferation agreements. Its acquisition and possession of weapons of mass destruction take place with the cooperation of a permanent member of the Security Council — a State which is actually a depositary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The only threat to the Middle East is that posed by the Zionist entity.

We understand the Zionist entity's accusations against the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), which was in fact carrying out espionage for Mossad, for the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and for other intelligence services. That is now well known to all. If the representative of the Zionist entity thinks for a minute that those spies will ever return to Iraq, he is harbouring a massive delusion — just as it is a delusion that his entity can eradicate the Palestinian identity or the Palestinian State which will be established on all the land from the sea to the river.

Mr. Lancry (Israel) (*spoke in French*): Let me begin with a brief reaction to the statements of the representatives of Iraq and of Iran. As members of the Assembly have surely noticed, the tongues of those two are struck with paralysis at the mere word "Israel". It is their custom to refer to Israel as "the Zionist entity". We are, in fact, proud of being a Zionist entity, and we have no problem with that designation. In other forums, the representatives of Israel are spoken of as representatives of the Zionist entity,

(*spoke in Arabic*)

or as the "Zionist representative" of "Tel Aviv's representative.

(*spoke in French*)

Let me note that the reputations of the Iraqi and the Iranian regimes are by now very clear, and have been since the Iran-Iraq conflict, not to mention Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait. In the light of that reputation, I need add nothing more. We believe that the international community is capable of assessing that reputation for itself.

Obviously, I would also like to respond to some of the statements made by other representatives.

With regard to the statement made by Lebanon, the Israeli military withdrawal on 24 May 2000 was intended to calm an area where there was a high risk of tensions. Moreover, Israel did so in full compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

At the time of Israel's military withdrawal — so long demanded by Lebanon, Syria and others — there was, to put it mildly, an incomprehensible reticence on the part of Syria and Lebanon regarding the withdrawal. President Bashar Al-Assad, who was at the time the virtual successor, had warned Israel not to withdraw under the prevailing circumstances because such a withdrawal could transform the region into a powder keg. Can anyone imagine such a great paradox? Israel decides to implement a resolution adopted by the Security Council, and this is opposed by two of the States that have an interest — Lebanon, which we should recognize did not have a great deal of room to manoeuvre, and Syria, the actual master of that territory.

The Israeli withdrawal — and this is the greatest part of the paradox — left the Lebanese Government in a state of confused indifference with regard to the exercise of its newfound sovereignty over its own territory. We recall that Security Council resolution 425 (1978) clearly invites the Government of Lebanon to deploy its troops along the Blue Line, to restore its sovereignty and to work to maintain peace and security there.

The Lebanese indecision — and this is a euphemism that I am using for reasons of decorum — is no doubt related to the cohabitation imposed by the only foreign Power, Syria, that is still present on Lebanese soil. This, as we see every day, is a very risky situation. Southern Lebanon, in particular its border region, faces the refusal of the Lebanese Government to shoulder its responsibilities and the territory is actually under the control of the terrorist Hezbollah terrorist organization. This situation, which intrinsically seems to be a strictly Lebanese affair, would not necessarily have compelled Israel to act were it not for the imminent danger to two States — Lebanon and Israel — that have no differences and that, until peace is established, could opt for peaceful coexistence.

The representative of Lebanon stated before the Assembly a short while ago that Israel was carrying out actions against Lebanese civilians who supposedly were just going to work. I would invite him to look at certain pictures of his own civilians, perhaps to read some of the reports, of civilians throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at Israeli military personnel legitimately deployed along the Blue Line, not only in the Shabaa area, but also at the port of Fatma.

I am asked what Israel is doing in the Shabaa territories. Those territories are, until further notice, subject to peace negotiations between Israel and Syria, and I would add that in the view of the United Nations those territories are not Lebanese. When they become so on the basis of appropriate international treaties, Israel will then take good note and will act appropriately within the United Nations definition of the Blue Line.

There is a total failure on the part of the Lebanese Government to shoulder its responsibilities. We call on it once again to do so and thus prevent an escalation of the existing violence — which, in the opinion of the Lebanese representative, is related to security issues for his Government.

To the Syrian representative I would say that he should listen carefully to the voices being raised in Lebanon itself where the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon are being demanded. For example, I do not know on the basis of which United Nations resolutions Syria continues to occupy Lebanon. Syria, according to certain United Nations resolutions, must do exactly what Israel has done: leave Lebanon and put an end to this source of instability, provocation and tension in the region.

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would have wished not to have to use the right of reply again on this issue. I had really hoped that the representative of Israel would not have used the right of reply in the light of the voting that he witnessed today.

After being indicted and condemned for the crimes it perpetrates every day, Israel continues to distort facts and falsify history. Syria, in its statement yesterday, in statements made by its leaders yesterday and on every other occasion, as well as in the resolutions of the Arab and Islamic summit conferences in which Syria has participated and been

actively involved, has affirmed repeatedly and continues to affirm that it is imperative that Israel completely withdraw from all occupied Arab territories and, in particular, to withdraw from all Lebanese territories, particularly the Shabaa farms.

We had previously sent a letter to the Secretariat and the Security Council that affirms and attests to the fact that the Shabaa farms are Lebanese territory. The Foreign Minister of Syria had previously contacted the Secretary-General and stressed that the Shabaa farms are Lebanese territories. Why does Israel want to stay in Shabaa? Why does Israel want to stay in the Syrian Golan? If the Israelis intend to bring about peace, why then are they staying there and how long will they stay? These are the questions that the Israeli representative should answer. How long will this prevarication over the peace process continue? And how long will the deliberate daily killing of Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied Arab territories continue?

Mr. Tadmoury (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I also wish to pose a few questions. Did Lebanon struggle against the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon for 22 years so that the Israeli representative could come here today and say that we rejected the Israeli withdrawal from our lands? Is this rational? Is this reasonable? Can any reasonable person understand this?

Secondly, I wish to point out here that Lebanon is not an island. It is part of the region. It acts, reacts and interacts with the rest of the region. The Israeli representative speaks of the people at the border throwing stones. Does he want people who spent more than 22 years under the yoke of occupation to throw roses and rice?

Can we gag people when we see what is happening in the occupied Palestinian territories? Are the Lebanese the only people reacting to what is happening? Is not a large part of the world reacting to what is happening in the occupied Palestinian territories? Despite that, the Lebanese Government has taken measures to deal with the situation, and has, to a great extent, curbed the demonstrations of which we have spoken. We see today what is happening.

Mr. Lancry (Israel) (*spoke in French*): I wish to make two or three brief points. The litany of the 22 years of occupation is worth defining more clearly. I wish to state here that the 22 years of occupation of southern Lebanon corresponded very strictly to the 22 years of aggression originating in southern Lebanon against Israel, particularly northern Israel. I can personally attest to this because before becoming the Ambassador of Israel to the United Nations, a long time ago I was the mayor of the Israeli border town Shlomi. I can testify to the years and decades of attacks. Later that region became a centre of Hezbollah terrorist activity. Katyusha rocket attacks were launched against civilian populations in towns, kibbutzes and settlements all along the Israeli border.

Perhaps this represents just half of a bitter truth that Prime Minister Barak so courageously brought to an end. There was aggression for 22 years, and that aggression continues. When I gave my statement, I spoke about the recent attack against an Israeli military patrol, in which Israeli soldiers were killed last Sunday. I hope that we are moving towards a period of real stability and coexistence that will no longer justify arguments from either side on occupation or aggression. We are asked to withdraw from all Lebanese territory; we repeat, we have done so, as confirmed by the Security Council.

We cannot use double-talk either in favour or against the Security Council. There cannot be a selective implementation of these resolutions, involving international legality on the one hand while there is international haziness on the other. We have fully implemented Security Council resolution 425 (1978). The Security Council recognized the kidnapping of three Israeli soldiers as a very serious violation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), as was the other attack, and it has called upon Lebanon to assume its responsibilities, which, according to some Security Council members who are perhaps in this Hall now, it has not done. The Secretary-General's report is very eloquent in this regard.

As far as withdrawal from Lebanese territory is concerned, there are many people trying to teach us lessons, but I would say to them that they should learn their own lessons. If there is still a foreign Power in Lebanon, and if there are still traces of occupation in Lebanon, they are not Israeli.

Mr. Al-Humaimidi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation did not want to take the floor again, but is obliged to do so because the falsification of facts by the Zionist entity today is very distressing. In its view, the Zionist occupation of southern Lebanon is not an

occupation; it is self-defence. What a lie! This is simply an attempt to deceive and disparage others. I do not think others can accept such falsification of facts. It says that Iraq is an occupying Power. It has forgotten that the Zionist entity is based on an ongoing occupation that has lasted more than 50 years.

I do not wish to go into details about the occupation. All delegations present know how ugly the Israeli occupation has been so far.

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 40.

Agenda item 41 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Draft resolutions (A/55/L.45, A/55/L.46, A/55/L.47, A/55/L.48)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on this item at its seventy-fifth and seventy-sixth plenary meetings, on 29 and 30 November 2000.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/55/L.45, A/55/L.46, A/55/L.47 and A/55/L.48.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote before the voting.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Gardner (United States of America): My Government opposes the draft resolutions under agenda item 41, "Question of Palestine". The first three of these draft resolutions support institutions whose activities and approach to the issues continue to be unbalanced and outdated. This body should focus its efforts on creating a positive atmosphere — one in which the two parties are encouraged to return to negotiations.

The current, terrible cycle of violence must end. The tragic loss of life — Palestinian and, increasingly, Israeli — can only do more harm to a process that was, until recently, a source of hope for the parties and the region in general. The General Assembly should be in the business of supporting the process of negotiation — supporting the attempt to reach agreements that can lead to a peaceful settlement of disputes. It should not be in the business of issuing one-sided criticism or authorizing the wasteful expenditure of funds for anachronistic committees and reports.

The draft resolution entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" lays out the position of one party to the negotiations — a position that is obviously unacceptable to the other party. Not only is it unhelpful, it is counterproductive.

The United States has worked hard — and will continue to work hard — to encourage the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians yielded significant progress and could yield still further progress if they are resumed. These draft resolutions can only complicate the efforts of the parties to achieve a settlement. We suggest that members of the General Assembly ask themselves whether these draft resolutions will help to advance, in any concrete and practical way, the real interests of the Palestinian people, including their desire for a Palestinian State.

The United States delegation believes the answer is clear. We will therefore vote against these four draft resolutions, and we invite others to do the same.

Mr. Lancry (Israel): Israel will vote against the draft resolutions contained in documents A/55/L.45, A/55/L.46, A/55/L.47, and A/55/L.48.

The ritualistic recycling of these outdated draft resolutions year after year reflects an utter obliviousness of the peace process and the new realities in the Middle East. Draft resolutions A/55/L.45 and A/55/L.46 refer, respectively, to what are termed the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat. Since their inception, these bodies have obstructed dialogue and understanding through a preset, one-sided portrayal of the Arab-Israeli situation. They are engaged in activities which hinder, rather than promote, progress towards achieving a peaceful, negotiated and mutually acceptable solution.

Draft resolution A/55/L.47 endorses the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat. This programme, through its various seminars, missions and exhibits, also promotes a distorted and one-sided perspective of the conflict.

Draft resolution A/55/L.48 claims to support the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, just as it makes reference to Israeli-Palestinian agreements, beginning with the Israeli-PLO Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993. Yet the draft resolution, in content and purpose, actually goes against these agreements and undermines the peace process it professes to support.

The Declaration of Principles, as well as the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement, cited in the preambular paragraphs, directly prohibits the use of such extraneous and prejudicial instruments as this draft resolution. The interim Agreement states,

> "Neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations".

Furthermore, it should be recalled that, on 9 September 1993, the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Chairman Arafat, wrote to the late Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, that

> "The PLO commits itself to the Middle East peace process, and to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two sides and declares that all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations."

It should be further recalled that all diplomatic breakthroughs in the Middle East, beginning with the Camp David Accords, through the Treaty of Peace with Jordan and right up to the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum of last year, were arrived at exclusively through direct negotiations between the parties.

However, this draft resolution openly seeks to predetermine the issues to be resolved by those negotiations. Therefore, this draft resolution both violates existing agreements and undermines the integrity and the foundations of the peace process. That is why Israel must vote against this draft resolution.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/55/L.45, A/55/L.46, A/55/L.47 and A/55/L.48.

We turn first to draft resolution A/55/L.45, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People".

I should like to announce that, since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of A/55/L.45: Guyana and Togo.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino,

Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia

Draft resolution A/55/L.45 was adopted by 106 votes to 2, with 48 abstentions (resolution 55/52).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Jamaica informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: We turn next to draft resolution A/55/L.46, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat".

I should like to announce that, since the publication of the draft resolution, Guyana has become a sponsor of A/55/L.46.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia

Draft resolution A/55/L.46 was adopted by 107 votes to 2, with 48 abstentions (resolution 55/53).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Jamaica informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: We turn next to draft resolution A/55/L.47, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat".

I should like to announce that, since the publication of the draft resolution, Guyana has become a sponsor of A/55/L.47.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada,

Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of)

Draft resolution A/55/L.47 was adopted by 151 votes to 2, with 2 abstentions (resolution 55/54).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Jamaica informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.48, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine".

I should like to announce that, since the publication of the draft resolution, Togo has become a sponsor of A/55/L.48.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru

Draft resolution A/55/L.48 was adopted by 149 votes to 2, with 3 abstentions (resolution 55/55).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Jamaica informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to explain their votes on the resolutions just adopted.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Bigot (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of explaining the votes of the European Union on the resolutions entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People" and "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", contained in documents A/55/L.45 and A/55/L.46, respectively.

Significant progress has been made in the Middle East peace process over the years, with a view to establishing a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. During the Summit held this summer at Camp David, the Israelis and the Palestinians made courageous gestures. They had never seemed so close to reaching agreement. But since that time, unfortunately, tragedy has overtaken negotiations.

The European Union has expressed many times its extreme concern over the current situation inspires in us. Nevertheless, the Union wants to believe that the peace process will soon resume; there is no alternative.

The European Union regrets that the mandates of the two United Nations entities in charge of the Palestinian issue do not sufficiently reflect the spirit of the peace process. That is why the members of the European Union, as in previous years, have abstained in the voting today on those two draft resolutions.

Nonetheless, on behalf of the European Union, I would wish to commend here this year's work of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat in such areas as public information through the Internet, the training of Palestinian public servants and its computerization of the land register of Mandate Palestine under the auspices of United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine. The Division worked effectively to complete that task, which is essential for the future.

The European Union also welcomes its ongoing dialogue with the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We are ready to pursue this exchange of views with the aim of ensuring that the mandate and activities of the Committee are more in line with the spirit of Madrid and Oslo so as to allow full support of and a constructive contribution towards the peace process.

Mr. Macedo (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/55/L.48 because it believes that the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine is vital to the settlement of the Middle East conflict. However, I would like to reiterate the following regarding the contents of operative paragraph 3.

Mexico notes that one of the basic understandings of the peace process in the Middle East has been the exchange of land for peace. The land-for-peace formula has proven its usefulness in the search for a solution to this particular conflict. However, it would seem risky to make it a universal legal principle to be applied as a norm in all conflicts. Higher than that basic understanding is the general principle of international law holding that conquest does not grant territorial rights. We all recognize as a fundamental norm that the acquisition of land through the use of force is inadmissible. As a corollary to this universal principle, it must be concluded that the entirety of any territory occupied during an armed conflict must be returned to its legitimate owner without conditions.

For these reasons, the delegation of Mexico reiterates that, while we recognize the political value of the basic understanding, we feel it would be unsound to raise it to the level of a general principle of international law. Mexico would like to call once again for greater precision in the language used to describe a political understanding that is not and cannot be a universal legal principle.

In fact, in the preambular section of resolution 55/51 on the Syrian Golan, which was adopted today, the term used is "the formula of land for peace", a much more accurate expression to describe the understanding. The word "formula" is the one we would prefer to see in all draft resolutions on this matter. For Mexico, it is a question of legal accuracy in the use of terms, which has no bearing on the substance of the political understanding.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to express our profound gratitude to all the member States that supported the resolutions adopted here today by vast majorities, with only a couple of votes against, under the items on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. Of course, we extend our particular thanks to those friendly countries that sponsored and voted in favour of the resolutions.

One representative asked delegations to question whether these resolutions serve the practical interests of the Palestinian people. As the representative of the Palestinian people, we can say that the answer to that question is "yes". We appreciate the fact that most member States have given the same positive answer. These resolutions are of great importance to our people and to the Middle East region in general. They send the right message to the parties concerned, particularly in the very difficult and painful circumstances in which the Palestinian people find themselves at the moment.

These resolutions send a message of solidarity with the Palestinian people. They send a message affirming the legal and political position that must constitute a solution to the question of Palestine and to the building of peace in the region. They send a message affirming the ongoing responsibility of the United Nations vis-à-vis the question of Palestine, including through the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and the Palestine and Decolonization Section of the Department of Public Information. Finally, they send a message to Israel that its positions and practices are unacceptable to the international community.

Perhaps one of the most important of the resolutions adopted today is that on Jerusalem. The content of that draft resolution is of great importance to us. It also reflects the importance that the international community attaches to the Holy City and its rejection of Israel's positions regarding that city. The resolution is also important in terms of the results of the voting. Only Israel voted against it, which clearly demonstrates that the entire world is on one side and that Israel, with its illegal position, is alone on the other. This should prompt Israel to reconsider its position. On our part, we entertain the great hope that it will do so.

We would like to repeat our thanks to all Member States. We hope that during the next session of the General Assembly we will be witness to different circumstances and developments, and that by then Palestine will have become a State Member of the United Nations.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 41.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.